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AUTHOR Evans, Arthur H., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

"Dead" faculty members are ones who find little fulfillment in their work. The author offers some solutions for this lack of satisfaction, such as more dynamic educational leadership and programs of continuous learning. Department chairmen could serve as educational leaders by initiating faculty curriculum committees, various evaluation methods, and by providing the necessary supporting services for these undertakings. Continuous learning could be enhanced by allowing faculty members to attend meetings, workshops, and conferences pertaining to their particular interests. (RC)

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The "Dead" Faculty Member: Prevention and Cure

by

Arthur H. Evans, Jr.
City College of San Francisco
San Francisco, California

JC 700 072

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The "Dead" Faculty Member: Prevention and Cure

Overheard in the faculty lounge or over the dining room table:

"Why aren't students more motivated these days? They just sit there in class and look bored."

"Why did it have to rain today? That golf match was the only thing I've had to look forward to."

Do such statements sound familiar? Have you ever caught yourself saying or feeling similar thoughts? Perhaps these are just the normal reactions of involved faculty who have encountered temporary frustration. And yet, such sentiments could indicate an underlying feeling of staleness and emptiness towards teaching. A teacher might have found that the job has become perfunctory, something to be completed as quickly and easily as possible. Challenges are found outside the classroom. No longer does he give of himself in his classes, either because he is shielding his ego or because only a hollow shell remains. Katz has called this phenomenon "the deadwood process."[1]

With the growing junior college enrollments and the increasing number of junior college faculty, with all the accompanying costs, it is imperative that effective teachers be hired and that all possible efforts be made to keep them at peak teaching efficiency. Two keys to faculty vitality are dynamic educational leadership and continuous learning.

What Causes the "Deadwood Process?":

"Like everyone else, teachers seek personal adequacy and fulfillment

and their behavior will be deeply affected by the degree of adequacy they feel they have a chance to achieve."[2] Many faculty have a goal to be an effective teacher and they believe effective teaching is worth striving for. They will become very discouraged if this goal is not rewarded by their colleagues and supervisor, and if the work environment does not support their effort.

Teachers quite often feel apart from the rest of society. Perhaps this is due to their different working hours, or to the inability to accurately measure and reward their work, or to the inadequate pay for their education and talents which existed for many years. Katz feels that economic deprivation has been one of principal reasons for their feeling of isolation from the rest of society.[3] Whether such feelings are justified, the most important thing is the demoralizing effect such an attitude can have on creativity and personal striving, so necessary to being an effective teacher.

The question thus becomes how to build a professional toughness and esprit de corps within faculty so that they can withstand the demands on the psyche and still be creative, alert, and growing. While some people would say just double teachers' salaries, this would not automatically increase effectiveness. If a teacher were already feeling inadequate about how good a job he was doing, such a pay increase without any accompanying change in the environment in which he worked might serve to demoralize him even more. There are more factors than pay involved in job satisfaction. It would seem that this would be especially true for teachers. Why else would talented and educated people remain in the profession if it were for pay alone! An exploration of some of these other factors may help show the way to maintaining faculty vitality.

Establishing the Environment

Educational leaders talk about developing a learning environment for students. But how often do they attempt to create an environment for faculty growth and development as effective teachers? Only by setting the desired level of performance and the goals and objectives to be achieved will the desired behavior be obtained. Work groups tend to set their own standards if not given some by the employer. A variety of group pressures are constantly in effect to encourage conformity.

An effective working environment for a junior college instructor will help him reduce tensions and solve dichotomies. There is a need for meaningful dialogue among faculty about content and methods without destroying instructors' feelings of competency due to disagreement. Faculty often feel intensely that their students must learn the material in order to be successful. And yet so many students learn in spite of the teacher or without his assistance. The instructor is thus torn between feeling valuable and feeling worthless. Success at bridging such feelings of inadequacy will come from communication and involvement among colleagues and leaders.

The Educational Leaders

Leadership in education does not belong exclusively to any one group. Every professional involved in education can and does exercise educational leadership. Each individual instructor is a leader due to the responsibility for his courses, especially when he is in the classroom. Thus, every teacher must be his own personal leader by setting goals and working to improve himself. Without self-motivation and commitment, particularly at the beginning of a teaching career, an instructor's

contribution and effectiveness as a teacher will be marginal. The drive to be an effective teacher must come from within; it cannot be superimposed.[4]

An organization, no matter how loosely structured, depends on leadership from the highest echelon to provide direction to the organization's activities. Nowhere is this more true than in education. Leadership is exercised in one manner or another by each administrative level. In terms of developing effective faculty, the lowest administrative or supervisory level is the most crucial. Here is the "working level" educational leader. This individual has many different titles and requires his authority and responsibility in a variety of ways depending on the institution. Department chairman is perhaps the most descriptive and the least threatening title to use for this individual. An ideal arrangement is for the chairman to teach a partial program and to spend the balance of his time as a leader for his colleagues. He is then one of them and a supervisor at the same time.

The primary purpose of the department chairman is to provide leadership in establishing the goals for the department and the group of faculty he represents. His role is that of a catalyst, a convener, and a promoter. The chairman is continually concerned with communication, both as a listener and as a transmitter. Through him, channels of communication are opened for each faculty member as the chairman creates the environment for dialogue and exchange, sometimes through himself, but more often around him. The department chairman thus becomes the vital link outside the teacher in keeping the teacher alive and constantly striving to maintain and improve instruction.

The basic qualification for a department chairman is the desire to exercise educational leadership. An understanding of behavioral psychology and the dynamics of group leadership will be most useful. Professional experience and expertise will gain him the respect of the faculty. He must believe in effective teaching, know its components, and be an effective teacher himself. Finally, a department chairman must be able to gain the support of his colleagues and their acceptance of his role as an educational leader.

A wide variety of activities can be used by a department chairman to stimulate the faculty towards effective teaching and to maintain their level of commitment. Positive, constructive feedback with regard to teaching performance will provide a teacher with information upon which to judge his own performance. If the faculty together developed a self-evaluation form and procedure, the chairman then can ask all faculty to try it out and report their reactions. In the belief that each faculty member can learn from the other, the chairman can encourage faculty to sit in on each others classes through taking the initiative by inviting all faculty to attend his classes. Regular evaluation visits should be made by the department chairman and a colleague in the same subject field. New faculty should be visited more frequently but no one should be free from being observed. The enthusiasm and creativity of new faculty can serve to stimulate the veteran members also. Every effort should be made to emphasize that the objective of evaluation is to improve instruction. Student evaluation questionnaires can be developed by the faculty for each course or each department. T. V. and audio-taping of a class for personal critiquing can be demonstrated to

the faculty under the chairman's direction. By making these activities the norm, especially for new faculty, an environment of self-improvement can be developed.

Faculty often have excellent suggestions for improvement of curriculum and the learning environment. An effective department chairman will draw out the best elements of their ideas and assist them in seeing their ideas put into action. The chairman can solicit involvement by creating curriculum committees and assigning faculty who volunteer or who he feels could contribute and benefit. By challenging the committee to develop meaningful answers to specific problems, faculty members would have a means of feeling a part of a group project. By passing around departmental "housekeeping" duties, such as equipment selection, supplies budgets, and room assignments, each faculty member would gain a greater understanding of the department's total activity.

Many other ways exist for the department chairman to create a professional working environment. The layout of facilities can do much to provide informal places for faculty to interact and to exchange ideas. The configuration of offices and the accessibility of lounges can promote a feeling of professional worth. Supporting services, such as clerical assistance, supplies, and equipment, all serve to create a feeling that someone really believes that the teacher is a vital link in the educational process.

Continuous Learning

An effective faculty member is committed to the value of education. Thus, it should follow that a teacher would recognize the need for continuous learning throughout his professional career in order to maintain his

subject matter competency and to increase his understanding of the environment in which he is working. Growing, dynamic people are constantly in need of new experiences and ideas. And yet during most of the year, faculty are wrapped up in one department of one college teaching courses identical or similar to those taught in previous years. Interaction is largely with the same group of colleagues. While such a pattern is necessary to accomplish the task of educating a continuous stream of students, it is important to work continuously to insure that boredom and frustration are not caused by the pattern of work becoming routine.

Faculty need the opportunity to escape the confines of the campus to attend educational conferences and professional society meetings. The chance to exchange ideas and to learn of new developments can breathe fresh drive and exuberance into courses. Even a speaker at a regular luncheon meeting can provide resource material for one or two lectures. The cost of attendance at meetings needs to be budgeted in such a manner that all faculty have the opportunity to go. If a teacher feels that all such activities are worthless, a need exists to explore the reasons for his feelings and review the possible values from such activities. Since greater travel distances increase costs, it is necessary to weigh the value of several local meetings against that of a more distant conference. In all cases, attendance should be planned on a coordinated basis within each discipline and a means developed for the attendees to report their experiences to their colleagues, thus increasing the dissemination of information.

The exchange of faculty among institutions in a given area offers exciting possibilities for stimulation and growth.[5] If faculty could

spend a year teaching at a different college, they might gain valuable insights into their home institution's problems and their own methods of instruction. The implementation of such a plan in a metropolitan area could be accomplished with relative ease and at almost no additional cost. Faculty teaching basic lower division courses would be a logical group to initiate an exchange since they could merely exchange teaching programs without any severe problems of adjustment. Junior colleges could exchange teachers of transfer courses among themselves or with four-year institutions and universities. Semi-professional program instructors would have to be rotated more carefully to insure that they were teaching in comparable areas. Hopefully, each exchange faculty member would have the opportunity to teach at least one new and different course. However, it would be unreasonable to expect the teacher to have an entirely different program at his exchange institution. After all, how else can he find ways to improve some of his own courses except but teaching them in a different environment with a different group of colleagues. Salary should probably continue to be paid by the home institution, along with a travel allowance for any increase in commuting distance. An alternative plan would be to reward an outstanding faculty member by allowing him to spend a semester traveling to several colleges, spending two to three weeks at each observing and serving as a guest lecturer. Upon his return to his home institution, he would have a variety of materials and methods to present to the departmental curriculum committee for consideration. The most logical group to coordinate a faculty exchange program would be an association or a consortium of colleges in a given region.

In-service training programs are becoming an absolute necessity for junior colleges. Faculty are being recruited from a wide range of sources

and bring diverse backgrounds. Many of them have only a sketchy knowledge of the junior college. They need an opportunity to develop an awareness of the history, philosophy, and objectives of the junior college. New faculty should be provided with an opportunity to study the role and purpose of the junior college in the context of United States education. Because the junior college is moving in new directions at rapid speeds, tenured faculty need periodic programs to bring them up to date.

The junior college student body is becoming more heterogenous as more segments of society turn to it for general education and skill training. The cultural background of many of the faculty is white middle-class whereas many of today's students are from minority groups and lower socio-economic categories. Entering students' educational background is often deficient in many skills and attitudes that most faculty would take for granted. And yet these are the students who stare back at the instructor in his classroom. Thus, all junior college faculty need training in communication with minority groups and in understanding their cultural background. Many faculty need training in how to listen to students and to feel empathy. But how many junior colleges are attempting to accomplish this training in a significant and organized manner?

There is much talk about innovation in teaching but how much really reaches individual faculty and produces meaningful results? New approaches have to be proven. A well-planned, on campus workshop might attract the experimenters who would carry the message back to their colleagues. Or perhaps each new method should be demonstrated to a group of instructors in one department to illustrate how it is applicable to their immediate situation. In these ways, teachers will be learning continuously and

finding new challenges and stimulation.

Evaluation: Does the Prevention and Cure Work?

As with any program that costs time and money and is expected to produce results, there must be some evaluation tool, even if very rough, in order to measure progress. The hardest task is to find quantitative measures to assess before and after performance. In fact, Dr. Hugh Semens, President of Foothill College, believes that the value of in-service training must be accepted on intuitive faith because meaningful quantitative evaluation is impossible.[6] Perhaps the spectre of what a college would be like without educational leadership or continuous learning by the faculty can serve as sufficient justification.

Specific courses or workshops for faculty have specific objectives which can be measured. Tests can be used to measure information received or attitudes developed. A survey questionnaire six months later can ask for comments on ideas which were useful. Observation by colleagues and the teacher himself can measure the number of different teaching techniques used and in what proportion. If this were a regular part of evaluation, it would be possible to see efforts made to use new ideas and methods learned from programs and colleagues. The increase in the number of requests for video-taping and audio-visual equipment would indicate acceptance of new methods.

However, since the end result is classroom performance, video-taping offers the best means of assessment presently available. By periodically recording an instructor's classes, he will have feedback for himself. By recording the performance rather than having one colleague observe and

critique, personal interpretations become peripheral since the raw data is always present for study and restudy. While it is true that the presence of any outside person or object changes the normal classroom environment, increased frequency of use would reduce the uniqueness for both faculty and students. By saving tapes for several years, a full chronicle of change and improvement would be available.

Student evaluation of classroom performance deserves greater consideration as one point of view in assessing effective teaching. Students need to be guided into making meaningful comments. A well-designed questionnaire which incorporates both objective and open-ended questions allows for the widest possible response. Students should be informed at the beginning of the course and again towards the end that they will be given an opportunity to critique the course and the instructor. The completed evaluations should belong to the instructor and it should be his decision whether to show them to anyone else. Hopefully, he will want to discuss them with the department chairman and his colleagues.

Conclusion

The community college is currently increasing its efforts to reach the disadvantaged and to draw them into new and existing curriculums. Since these students are among the most difficult to teach, new approaches are required if the "open door" is not to be a "revolving door." Without total faculty awareness and support of the difficult challenges in successfully educating these new students, programs for the disadvantaged will fall far below their desired levels of achievement. Thus, educational leadership and a total commitment to faculty growth and development become even more imperative.

Footnotes

1. Sanford, Nevitt, The American College, (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1962), pp. 365-395.

2. Garrison, Roger H., "Effective Administration for Superior Leadership," Junior College Journal, 32:517-525, May 1962, p. 521.

3. Sanford, op. cit., p 375.

4. Deferrai, Roy J., Quality of College Teaching and Staff, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1961), p.68.

5. Sanford, op. cit., p. 377.

6. Personal interview with Dr. Semens.